

STATEMENT RESPECTING THE NAUTICAL SURVEY
IN CONNECTION WITH THE PACIFIC CABLE.

From the first conception of a trans-pacific cable it was considered necessary to obtain a proper nautical survey; this was especially the case when statements were made in certain quarters that such an undertaking could not be carried out owing to insuperable difficulties alleged to exist on the route. In order to invest the project with public confidence it was deemed exceedingly desirable that the survey should be undertaken by the British Admiralty as being the highest nautical authority in existence. Application was accordingly made at various times through the proper channel to the Admiralty to have the survey carried out by them.

At the Colonial Conference of 1887, Sir Alexander Campbell moved a resolution, setting forth "that the connection of Canada with Australia by direct submarine telegraph across the Pacific is a project of high importance to the Empire, and every doubt as to its practicability should without delay be set at rest by an exhaustive survey." In submitting the resolution Sir Alexander at some length dwelt upon the importance of the cable and the necessity of a survey. He likewise explained the repeated efforts which had been made to have it accomplished by the Admiralty. Among other things he said :—

"Canada proposed two or three years ago to assist in a survey. The difficulty which the Admiralty urged was that they had no vessel to spare, and therefore they could not do it.

"Canada had several vessels of her own, and she found a suitable one, the 'Alert,' an excellent ship for the purpose, which she had been using in connection with observations which she had been making for a couple of years, as to the time Hudson's Bay was open every year for navigation.

"She offered the 'Alert' for the purposes of the survey, and in that way she seemed to have answered completely the difficulty raised by the Admiralty.

"Canada wrote over to the Admiralty telling them that she had a suitable vessel; and then they would not do it at all. Then we offered to pay half the expense. Still the Admiralty would not do it, and there the matter stopped."

After the resolution moved by Sir Alexander Campbell was unanimously passed and the Conference closed, the following letter was addressed to the Right Honourable Sir Henry Holland (now Lord Knutsford), Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"LONDON, May 16th, 1887.

"SIR,—During the discussion on the subject of the postal and telegraphic communications of the Empire, before the Colonial Conference, the question was raised as to the practicability of submerging cables in the Pacific Ocean so as to connect Canada and Australia telegraphically, and as all doubts on the question should be removed with as little delay as

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possible, a thorough and exhaustive nautical examination should be at once made."

"The undersigned, therefore, on behalf of the Governments they represent, respectfully request that Her Majesty's Government will cause such survey to be made."

This letter was signed by the following gentlemen, comprising all the delegates to the Conference then in London.

For Canada,—

SIR ALEXANDER CAMPBELL,
MR. SANDFORD FLEMING.

For Victoria,—

MR. JAMES SERVICE,
MR. ALFRED DEAKIN,
SIR JAMES LORIMER,
SIR GRAHAM BERRY.

For New South Wales,—

SIR PATRICK JENNINGS,
SIR ROBERT WISDOM,
SIR SAUL SAMUEL.

For Queensland,—

SIR SAMUEL GRIFFITH,
SIR JAMES GARRICK.

For Western Australia,—

SIR JOHN FORREST,
MR. SEPTIMUS BURT.

For New Zealand,—

SIR WILLIAM FITZHERBERT,
SIR FRANCIS D. BELL.

For Tasmania,—

MR. J. S. DODDS,
MR. ADYE DOUGLAS.

For Newfoundland,—

SIR AMBROSE SHEA,
SIR ROBERT THORBURN.

For Natal,—

SIR JOHN ROBINSON.

For Cape of Good Hope,—

SIR CHARLES MILLS.

The Colonial Minister caused the above letter to be transmitted to the Admiralty on May 23rd. The Admiralty replied as follows:—

"ADMIRALTY, May 28th, 1887.

"SIR,—I have laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 23rd instant, inclosing a recommendation signed by the delegates to the late Colonial Conference, that a survey should be made with a view to determining the practicability of laying a cable between Canada and Australia; and further suggesting that Mr. Fleming should be placed in communication with the Hydrographer to the Admiralty with a view to discussing the question.



"2. In reply their Lordships desire me to state, for the information of Sir Henry Holland, that if Mr. Fleming has not already left London, he will find the Hydrographer at the Admiralty on any day he may like to fix.

"3. My Lords, however, desire me to add that unless the Secretary of State has reason to believe that a submarine cable is likely to be laid from Vancouver to Australia very shortly, their Lordships would not propose to despatch a surveying vessel for the sole purpose of obtaining soundings over the route, but that they will endeavour to arrange that soundings shall be gradually obtained during the next few years in the ordinary course of hydrographic surveys.

"I am, &c.,

"EVAN MACGREGOR.

"The Under Secretary of State,
"Colonial Office."

The writer of the following letter having been furnished with copies of the letters from the Colonial Office and the Admiralty, addressed the Colonial Minister as follows :—

"LONDON, June 8th, 1887.

"SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd instant, inclosing copies of letters between the Colonial Office and the Admiralty respecting the proposed nautical survey of the Pacific in connection with the laying of a cable between Canada and Australia.

"I beg leave to direct attention to the third paragraph of the letter from the Admiralty which reads as follows :—

"My Lords, however, desire me to add that unless the Secretary of State has reason to believe that a submarine cable is likely to be laid from Vancouver to Australia very shortly, their Lordships would not propose to despatch a surveying vessel for the sole purpose of obtaining soundings over the route, but that they will endeavour to arrange that soundings shall be gradually obtained during the next few years in the ordinary course of hydrographic surveys."

"Since the receipt of your letter of the 3rd instant, I have, with the permission of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, placed myself in communication with the Hydrographer, who has explained to me what is to be understood by the last part of the above quoted paragraph. From these explanations I have learned that it is not intended to do anything until next year; that next year it is expected that a surveying vessel will be despatched to Australian waters for other purposes, and that while there the officers will be instructed in the ordinary course of their duties, to endeavour to obtain some information which may be useful in connection with the question of laying a cable. It is intended to follow the same course year by year; but from all I can learn, no definite idea can be formed as to the time which will be expended before the work will be completed; indeed it does not appear quite certain that anything will be done even next year; it is hinted that the work may be interrupted and the surveying vessel taken away. It is scarcely necessary for me to point out that the course proposed to be followed will not accomplish the desired end. The records of the Conference will show how much importance is attached by every delegate to the telegraphic con-



nection of Canada and Australia. In an Imperial point of view its importance was held at the Conference to be second to no other question brought forward for discussion, and I think I may venture to say on behalf of the twenty-one delegates who attached their names to the letter of the 16th of May, addressed to Sir Henry Holland, that it will be a grave disappointment to them and to the Governments they represent, if no other course than that proposed and explained to me by the Hydrographer be followed. Sir Henry Holland, who presided over the Conference, will remember how strongly individual members spoke on the subject, and he knows also the view of the Conference as a body. On the last day of the Conference a resolution on the question was unanimously adopted, to which I think it would be well to direct the special attention of the Admiralty.

"I respectfully submit that the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty appear to have misapprehended the object of the application of the 16th of May. I may therefore venture to explain that as some of the officers of the Government and other gentlemen examined before the Conference gave testimony which raised doubts as to the practicability of establishing a direct telegraph across the Pacific, a general feeling prevailed that the question was of such paramount importance as to demand immediate attention and that every doubt should be set at rest by having a thorough and exhaustive survey made under the highest nautical authority. No one who attended the meetings of the Conference, or who has seriously considered the relations of the great self-governing Colonies to the Mother Country can for a moment doubt that an electric cable from Canada to Australasia, is imperatively demanded, and that if practicable will be established. The question of practicability, however, is precedent to all others, and it is therefore of the utmost importance that the request of the delegates to the Conference, made collectively and individually on behalf of their respective Governments, should be reconsidered.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"SANDFORD FLEMING.

"The Under Secretary of State,
"Colonial Office."

The correspondence was continued throughout the year 1887 by the Colonial Office, the Admiralty, and the Governor General of Canada, but nothing practical was done in prosecuting the survey until the following year.

On the 7th of March the following telegram was sent from Melbourne to Lord Knutsford by the Governor of Victoria:—

"In accordance with resolution passed by Postal Conference held Sydney, the whole Australian Colonies being represented, my Government ask that Admiralty may be moved to make early survey of suitable route for ocean cable telegraph by way of Pacific Ocean *via* Vancouver Island, cost to be defrayed by Her Majesty's Government, Government of Canada, and Australasian Colonies."

Thereupon the letter which follows was transmitted from the Colonial Office to the Admiralty.



" DOWNING STREET, 16th March, 1888.

" SIR,—With reference to your letters (M. 1212) of the 28th of May and (M. 1557) of the 5th of July last on the subject of a proposed telegraph cable between Canada and Australia, I am directed by Lord Knutsford to transmit to you, to be laid before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a copy of a telegram received from the Government of Victoria March 7th, 1888, urging that an early survey may be made of a suitable line for a cable.

" As the Colonial Governments of Australia appear to be prepared to provide, in conjunction with the Imperial Government and the Government of Canada, a proportionate share of the expenses of such a survey, Lord Knutsford, with a view to that further consideration of the question which has become necessary, would be obliged if their Lordships would furnish him if it is in their power to do so, with an approximate estimate of the probable cost of a survey.

" I am, &c.,

"JOHN BRAMSTON.

" The Secretary to the Admiralty."

On hearing from the Admiralty Lord Knutsford transmitted a circular despatch to the Governor General of Canada, and the Governors of the Australian Colonies, conveying the decision arrived at by Her Majesty's Government.

" DOWNING STREET, 1st May, 1888.

" SIR,—I have the honour to transmit to you, for communication to your Government, a copy of a letter which I caused to be addressed to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty respecting the survey which Her Majesty's Government have been requested to make of a route for a cable telegraph between Canada and Australia across the Pacific Ocean, together with an extract from their Lordships' reply.

" Her Majesty's Government concur in the opinion expressed in the letter from the Admiralty that the question of accelerating the survey must remain open until there is a prospect that the funds for the construction of the cable will be found."

" I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

" KNUTSFORD."

Extracts from a letter from the Admiralty to the Colonial Office, dated 4th April, 1888.

" 5. H.M.S. 'Egeria' is now on the point of sailing from Sydney to perform the important work of clearing up the dangers, and fixing the positions of, and surveying the islands on the route from New Zealand to Vancouver, a work which my Lords understood was strongly urged by Rear-Admiral Sir George Tryon on the representations of the Colonies."

" 6. In the course of this work the 'Egeria' has orders to obtain deep soundings which will in two or three years furnish more detailed information than now exists as to the varieties of depths to be expected on the general line of cable."

" 7. To survey a route for a cable to any purpose would, however, entail long searching for the best line, examination

of contours of coral islands, and continuous close soundings; and three years' steady work at that and nothing else would probably not complete the survey."

"8. The operations on which the 'Egeria' is about to be employed will provide for work of immediate value to, and of urgent necessity in connection with, the commerce now springing up; and will also furnish gradually (at a minimum cost) the preliminary information required, and a great part of that directly bearing on the laying of a cable."

"9. My Lords do not, therefore, consider that it is advisable to make any alteration in the orders under which the 'Egeria' is about to act; and as no vessel can be spared from her hydrographic work in any other part of the world the question of hastening the survey by providing another vessel must, in their Lordships' opinion, remain open, until Lord Knutsford is able to inform this department that there is a reasonable prospect that the funds for the construction of the submarine cable across the Pacific will be found, and that time is of importance in Imperial interests."

"10. In reply to the inquiry contained in the last part of your letter, my Lords desire me to state that the annual cost of H.M.S. 'Egeria' is about £12,000, and that if a similar vessel is provided especially for the purpose of making a complete survey of the best ocean route and landing places, the cost would be about £36,000. The foregoing estimate is irrespective of the value of the vessel, and the cost of fitting her out."

On receiving copies of these communications the writer of the following letter felt it incumbent upon him to address Lord Stanley, Governor General of Canada on the subject.

"OTTAWA, 28th June, 1888.

"His Excellency

"The Right Honourable Lord Stanley,

"Governor General of Canada.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:—

"I have the honour to refer to a circular despatch of date 1st May, 1888, which Lord Knutsford has addressed to the Governors of the Australian Colonies and the Governor General of Canada, on the proposed survey of a suitable route for the cable telegraph projected between Canada and Australia by way of the Pacific Ocean.

"I am impelled by a sense of duty to ask Your Excellency's permission to submit the following remarks, in the hope that Your Excellency will consider the subject of importance sufficient to justify further proceedings being taken.

"The consideration of postal and telegraph inter-communication as essential to the consolidation of the Empire was specially alluded to in the circular despatch of Mr. Stanhope, 26th November, 1886, summoning the Conference, which met in London in 1887. The Colonial Minister dwelt on it as a 'great question' which concerned in a special degree the interests of the whole of the Queen's dominions and he reproduced the words used in the Queen's speech at the prorogation of Parliament, expressing the conviction of Her Majesty 'that there is on all sides a growing desire to draw closer in every practicable way the bonds which unite the various portions of the Empire.'



"In his address at the opening of the Conference, the President, Lord Knutsford, gave great prominence to the question, and at subsequent meetings (April 19, 20, 27 and May 6) the proposal to establish a telegraph cable between Canada and Australia was earnestly discussed. I beg leave to refer to the accompanying return to the Parliament of Canada to an address of the Senate dated 27th March last (page 8 to 82) for minutes of these discussions and also for a resolution which was unanimously passed at the close of the Conference. This resolution sets forth that under every aspect, naval, military, commercial and political, the establishment of such a line of telegraphic communication would have great value, and that, every doubt as to its practicability should, without delay, be set at rest by a thorough and exhaustive survey.

"The doubt as to the practicability of the project arose from statements made to the Conference by gentlemen who appeared before them on the invitation of the Imperial authorities, among others the chairman of the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies and the secretary of the Imperial Post Office Department, introduced to the Conference as the highest authority on telegraph matters existing. In speaking of the route of the proposed cable these gentlemen alluded to ocean depths which had previously been unheard of and to other obstacles which might prove insuperable, leaving an impression on the minds of the delegates of doubt and uncertainty, which can only be removed by actual survey.

"After the Conference had closed, in order to emphasize the convictions they had formed that an immediate and exhaustive survey was indispensable, the delegates addressed a letter to the Colonial Minister. I desire to direct Your Excellency's attention to this letter, dated 16th May, 1887, and the correspondence which immediately followed (pages 137 to 140 of accompanying return). The letter is signed by twenty-one delegates, representing the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, Newfoundland, Natal, the Cape of Good Hope, New Zealand and Canada.

"A further correspondence took place, the most important portion of which, to the end of 1887, appears in the accompanying return. I have the honour to append copies of the more recent correspondence, viz. —

"1. Copy of a telegram from the Governor of Victoria to Lord Knutsford, dated Melbourne, 7th March, 1888, referring to a resolution passed at a conference held recently at Sydney, the whole of the Australian colonies being represented, urging that an early survey of a suitable route for the cable be made, and pointing out that the colonies would share in the expense.

"2 Letter from the Colonial Office to the Admiralty, dated 16th March, 1888, inclosing a copy of the telegram from Australia and requesting information with respect to the probable cost of a survey.

"3. Extract from a letter from the Admiralty to the Colonial Office dated 4th April, 1888, pointing out that H.M.S. 'Egeria' is under instructions 'to perform the important work of clearing up the dangers, and fixing the positions of, and surveying the islands on the route from New Zealand to Vancouver,' and that 'in the course of this work the 'Egeria' had orders to obtain deep soundings which will in two or three years furnish more detailed information than now exists as to the varieties of depths to be expected on the general line of cable.' The letter further states that to survey a route for a cable, 'three



years' steady work at that and nothing else would probably not complete the survey'; also that 'the question of hastening the survey by providing another vessel, must, in their Lordships' opinion remain open until Lord Knutsford is able to inform the department that there is a reasonable prospect that the funds for the construction of the submarine cable across the Pacific will be found, and that time is of importance in Imperial interests.'

'4. Circular from the Colonial Minister transmitting the above letter and concurring in the opinion expressed in the letter of the Admiralty that the question of accelerating the survey must remain open until there is a prospect that the funds for the construction of the cable will be found.

"The proposal to establish a telegraph cable from Canada to Australia by way of the Pacific, had its origin in the Dominion. It has been recognized by men representing every one of the Colonies in the Southern Hemisphere and by Her Majesty's Minister that the enterprise is of value, not simply on account of the connection which it would establish between Canada and the great Colonies on the opposite shore of the Pacific, but likewise from the influence it would exercise in the consolidation of the Empire. On this ground it has always been considered that the co-operation of the Imperial Government may with confidence be claimed. The representatives of Canada at the Conference endeavoured succinctly to represent the favourable results which would follow the construction of this direct line of communication and the representatives of all the other Colonies freely gave expression to their views, confidently dwelling on the hopes and aspirations they entertained.

"I will not, my Lord, in this communication repeat the arguments brought forward at the Conference to justify our expectations that the Colonies will obtain the sympathy of the Imperial Government in this effort. It may, however, be said that this new line of communication will promote the cultivation of intercourse and more intimate relationship and cannot fail to establish a more perfect bond of union, and identity of interest nationally and commercially between Australia, Canada and England to exercise the happiest influences. Moreover, the whole route from England to Australia, runs through British territory or through waters removed from the risk of communications being tampered with, as might happen on passing through foreign soil or in the shallow seas around the shores of foreign countries. The work is indeed a national undertaking of importance to the common interests in time of peace and of greater value in time of war in view of the common safety and the maintenance of the integrity of the Empire. It was in view of these considerations that the representatives of the Colonies asked upwards of a year back that every doubt as to the practicability of the undertaking should without delay be set at rest.

"I beg leave to refer Your Excellency to the extracts from the letter of the Admiralty appended. It is stated that if the telegraph survey was made the primary and only object of the expedition the means now being employed would scarcely complete the examination in three years, but, it is obvious from the instructions issued that the work of obtaining the information is made incidental and subsidiary to other duties as of secondary importance. Such being the case it is difficult to forecast an estimate of the number of years, under the orders, conveyed in the Admiralty letter, within which the cable surveys will be completed. It may indeed extend over a dozen or more years.



"I respectfully direct your Excellency's attention to the strong feeling entertained that no such delay should take place. It will not be overlooked that any doubt of the practicability of the project has not been raised by the outer provinces of the Empire; it has in no way been advanced by those who represent the Australian Colonies, New Zealand or the Dominion; it was suggested by the witnesses brought forward by the Home Government. Naturally the Colonies look to the Home Government to set the question at rest as soon as possible.

"Until this question be settled it can scarcely be expected that much progress can be made in providing the funds for carrying out the enterprise. It will be no ordinary matter for the Governments of nine or ten countries, some of them separated by half the earth's circumference, to come to an agreement on the general details of a financial scheme, and it will be perfectly futile for them to do so if the survey should show that the undertaking is not practicable. On the other hand should the work be pronounced feasible, the circumstances which call for the consummation of the project will in one form or another assure its construction. I respectfully submit to Your Excellency that the people in the Colonies will fail to recognize that it is necessary, reasonable or just to expect that the funds should be provided or that the mode of raising the capital should be arranged previous to orders being given for the survey to be perseveringly and systematically carried on.

"At a meeting of the Conference on 20th April, 1887, at which the Pacific cable was considered, the Imperial Postmaster General, Mr. Raikes, explained the position of the Home Government. His remarks are so important, that I feel it my duty to ask Your Excellency's attention to them as they appear in the proceedings. The following is an extract:—

"When we are told by Mr. Fleming that it may be possible to transmit words at the rate of about two shillings per word *via* Canada and Pacific,' (nine shillings and fourpence per word being the lowest charge by the existing line), 'we see at once the perfect revolution in the communications between the Australian Colonies and the Mother Country, which would be effected if such an arrangement could be carried out. But I think the Conference will feel that, while appreciating the importance of this, and largely sympathizing with what I believe to be the most beneficial change of any of the changes which can come out of this Conference it would be a matter of extreme difficulty, I think without precedent, for the English Government itself to become interested in such a scheme in such a way as to constitute itself a competitor with an existing commercial enterprise carried on by citizens of the British Empire.'

"The enterprise alluded to by Mr. Raikes is the 'Eastern Extension Telegraph Company' whose lines extend from India to Australia.

"I will not attempt to disguise the conviction generally felt and which I fully entertain, that the new line of telegraph *via* Canada would make it impossible for that Company to continue to realize the profits it has hitherto enjoyed.

"There is really only one mode of carrying out the project, realizing any admitted benefits which it will create and satisfactorily overcoming the difficulty explained by Mr. Raikes. It is to constitute the undertaking an Imperial-Intercolonial work, taking over the property of the existing Company and placing the whole under one management. This proposal is considered in a memorandum dated 26th September, 1887,



(page 148 of accompanying Return), to which I beg leave to refer Your Excellency.

"While there should be the strongest desire to respect established rights and honourably recognize existing interests, on the other hand we must bear in mind the well-known principle, that no private Company, whatever its profitable operations, can be allowed to impede the general advantage of the Empire. The principle is clearly established that private interests must yield to public good; such private interests being fairly indemnified.

"In the Memorandum of 26th September, 1887, it is contemplated to carry out the undertaking under a joint Commission, on which would be represented the Imperial Government, and the Governments of Canada, the Australian Colonies, and New Zealand. That through this means the new Pacific cable would be established as a public work; and the cables of the Eastern Extension Company taken over at a fair valuation, whenever that Company desires to dispose of them. The members of the Commission to be appointed by the contributing Governments, and their duties and responsibilities defined and determined by these Governments.

"It is contemplated that the capital required for the undertaking shall be obtained on a joint Government guarantee, thus securing it at the lowest rate of interest. It is shown by the data given in the Memorandum that owing to the low rate at which money is thus obtainable it is possible to procure the amount required for the construction of the new cable with the addition of a sum sufficient to cover the value of the Eastern Extension Company's cables without involving much if any higher interest charges than the subsidies now paid.

"The interest on £2,030,000, the estimated cost of the new telegraph and the value of the present line, at 3 p.c. is £60,900, whereas it is anticipated that on the United Imperial and Colonial guarantee, money could be obtained at $2\frac{1}{2}$ or but little over that rate.

"The amount of the several subsidies now paid is £56,700, of which £36,600 is paid by the Australian Colonies.

"Opinions may vary with respect to the value of the cables of the Eastern Extension Company. I can only remark on this point that the calculations given in the Memorandum of the 26th September, 1887, are based on the testimony of the Company's highest officer, and on official data, which I do not consider can be disputed. Be the value what it may, the principle remains the same. It is proposed that the existing telegraph Company shall have the option of selling its cables to the joint Government Commission, at the price which shall represent their value at the date of transfer.

"It may be anticipated that the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company will claim for loss of profits something more than the actual value of their property. They should undoubtedly be considered in a fair and liberal spirit, but the question of indemnity and all other details may be left for future consideration. I am now only desirous of drawing Your Excellency's attention to the fact that it will not be difficult to provide all the funds required under some such arrangement as that suggested.

"The important feature of the proposal is the raising of capital on the joint guarantee of the Imperial and Colonial Governments. It will be within Your Excellency's knowledge that in 1867 a loan was raised on this principle towards carrying out an undertaking in which the Imperial and Canadian

Governments were mutually concerned, the railway connecting Quebec and Halifax. Under this arrangement the funds to the extent of £3,000,000 sterling were provided at a low rate of interest and by this means, without in anyway drawing on the Imperial exchequer, the Home Government rendered substantial aid in the construction of an important section of the national railway of Canada. By the same principle of co-operation, the great undertaking referred to in this communication, to which so much importance has been attached as a means of bringing into closer affinity the various portions of the Empire, may be successfully carried out.

" Previous to the departure from Canada of Your Excellency's predecessor, Lord Lansdowne, he received memorials from Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and other places praying him to take steps to constitute a Conference of delegates to devise means for the developments of intercourse, trade and commerce between Australia and Canada. A deputation waited upon him during His Excellency's last visit to Toronto, to press this proposal, and before he sailed for England a further deputation consisting of some twenty members of the Canadian Parliament waited upon him to advocate the same policy.

" Lord Lansdowne cordially favoured the suggestion and recognized that such a Conference was most desirable. He was good enough to state that he would use his influence with the Home Government to have the proposal carried into effect.

" A Conference of delegates representing Canada, the Australian Colonies and New Zealand would have no more important matter brought under their consideration than the subject I have endeavoured to submit to Your Excellency in this letter. It may even be assumed that one of their first duties would be to arrange the general details for carrying into execution the proposed public undertaking.

" I beg leave to express the hope that the explanations which I have made will enable You Excellency to represent to Lord Knutsford that there is a reasonable prospect of means being found for establishing the proposed cable telegraph across the Pacific, and that it is important to have the survey completed at as early a date as possible.

" I have the honour to be,

" Your Excellency's

" Very humble servant,

" SANDFORD FLEMING."

The object of the foregoing letter to His Excellency was to point out these facts, viz. :—

1. The establishment of a Pacific Cable was in harmony with Imperial policy as expressed by Her Majesty's Ministers, in connection with the Colonial Conference of 1887.

2. The Colonial Conference of 1887 gave emphatic expression to the value of a Pacific Cable under every aspect, naval, military, commercial, and political.

3. The delegates from the colonies collectively and individually, on behalf of the Governments they represented, urged in the strongest manner Her Majesty's Government to cause a nautical examination to be made to establish the practicability of the proposed cable.



4. The Admiralty after some delay undertook to make a hydrographic survey "on the route from New Zealand to Vancouver," but under the instructions given to the surveying ship "Egeria" many years would elapse before the work could be completed.

5. Representations were made to have the survey accelerated, but the Admiralty declined to push on the survey with greater expedition, on the ground that they should first be informed that there is a prospect of the funds being found for laying the cable.

6. It is shown that there was then as there is now, a reasonable prospect of means being found for establishing the cable, but that it is a matter of no ordinary difficulty to bring ten Governments, widely separated by distance, into agreement respecting funds and it would be futile to do so unless the survey proved the undertaking to be practicable.

7. The hope is therefore expressed that the Admiralty would see how reasonable it is that the survey should be accelerated, so that it would be completed at as early a date as possible in accordance with the frequently expressed wishes which have been referred to.

This appeal was made through the Governor General of Canada, but it remained without response. As far as known the Admiralty were not prevailed upon to hasten the survey or make any change in the orders issued to the "Egeria." At a later period, however, a change was made, but it was preceded by the following letters which explain themselves.

• FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE.

Letter from Mr. Sandford Fleming to Lord Knutsford.

"HOTEL VICTORIA, NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE,

"LONDON, W. C., June 26, 1890.

"The Right Honourable LORD KNUTSFORD,

"Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"My LORD,

"I feel constrained to address you on a subject which concerns Canada not less than other great divisions of the Empire.

"When I left Ottawa two weeks ago, the matter to which I desire to refer had not been noticed in any quarter on the other side of the Atlantic. My attention has been directed since my arrival here to communications in newspapers of recent date, and more particularly to an article in the *Times* of the 20th instant, on the subject of telegraphy between Great Britain and Australasia.

"If I understand the proposal which has been made, it is that the charges for telegraphing should be reduced to about one-half the present rates, on condition that the Imperial and Australian Governments join in guaranteeing a certain revenue to the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies; which guarantee would involve a liability estimated by the representatives of these companies at £54,000, more or less,



per annum. To put the proposal in other words, the Governments are asked, as I understand it, to assume the responsibility of supporting and maintaining the monopoly of the present line of telegraph for a period of ten years.

"The proposal is not new. It was made by the same Companies in a slightly modified form (the principle being the same) three years ago, but it was not then seriously entertained. My surprise is that it should again be renewed, and I feel it a public duty to point out the consequence which will result should the proposal be accepted.

"To enable me to do so it is necessary that I should refer to the proceedings of the Colonial Conference of 1887, at which I had the honour to be one of the representatives of the Dominion

"At this Conference an obligation rested upon the Canadian Delegates to explain the position of Canada in relation to the telegraphic communications of the Empire, and it was acknowledged by nearly every member of the Conference, that it would not be possible to overlook the undertakings and the peculiar geographical situation of the Dominion, in considering the telegraphic relations of England and Australia, and in dealing with Imperial communications as a whole.

"So much importance was attached to the subject, that after the proposal of the Telegraph Companies was submitted and every argument in its support advanced by their most able advocate and representative Sir John Pender, the Conference formally adopted two resolutions in favour of the Canadian route, and I desire to emphasize the fact that no propositions brought before the Conference were assented to more cordially or with greater unanimity.

"These resolutions read as follows:—

1st. "That the connection recently formed through Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific by railway and telegraph opens a new alternative line of Imperial communication over the high seas, and through British possessions, which promises to be of great value alike in naval, military, commercial, and political aspects."

2. "That the connection of Canada with Australia by direct submarine telegraph across the Pacific is a project of high importance to the Empire, and every doubt as to its practicability should, without delay, be set at rest by a thorough and exhaustive survey."

"The explanations and discussions of which these resolutions were the outcome, set forth in ample detail that the true way to permanently reduce the charges in telegraphy between Great Britain and Australia is to utilize the Canadian route, and establish a new cable across the Pacific from the western coast of the Dominion. It was likewise shown that by this alternative route the electric cable would be laid in deep water, and the telegraph would pass through countries under the British flag, and in consequence would in every respect be safer from injury than the existing line, and more permanently serviceable in peace or war.

"The representations of the Conference were considered of so much importance that the Admiralty commenced a survey of the new route, and up to present time has, as far as I am aware, discovered no difficulties in the way. Possession has also been taken by Great Britain of a number of islands in the Pacific, for the purpose of establishing mid-ocean stations.

"Recognizing that negotiations were necessary in order to reach a common understanding, the Government of Canada



two years ago invited the Governments of Australia and New Zealand to send delegates to Canada to consider the whole question of telegraphic and trade relations, and arrange terms. Correspondence resulted, involving delay, and it was finally agreed that delegates should be sent from Canada to Australia. Accordingly, the Canadian Government appointed delegates last year, but the proposed federation of the Australian Colonies postponed their visit under the conviction that more effective action would be attainable after federation became accomplished. The unfortunate delay proceeds from causes, some or which exhibit the extreme desirability of having closer connection by a direct cable across the Pacific. I believe I am correct in stating that the Canadian Government only awaits the proper moment again to commission delegates to proceed on the same mission.

"Under these circumstances it certainly would be a retrograde step to adopt the proposal of the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies. Its adoption would practically put an end to any prospect of connecting Canada and Australia telegraphically for ten years to come, possibly for a much longer period. Admitting all that can be said in favour of reducing telegraph charges, admitting that they cannot be reduced a moment too soon, would it be wise to prevent the establishment of an alternative line, which, to a greater extent than by any other means, would have the effect of reducing these charges? If time be an element of importance, is it not the true policy to accelerate the survey undertaken by the Admiralty, and make arrangements for establishing the new line with the least possible delay? It is obvious that the acceptance of the proposal of the existing Telegraph Companies would prove a serious blow to Colonial development and commercial expansion on the waters of the Pacific. It cannot be accepted without completely ignoring the commanding position of the Dominion, and disregarding all that Canadian enterprise has done to make that position commanding. Would this be wise? Is it expedient? Are there not Imperial interests of the first magnitude involved in the question?

"In 1886 Her Majesty's Government advised the Queen to summons a Conference for the discussion of questions of general importance to the whole Empire. The Colonial Minister in calling the Conference specially alluded to the development of Imperial telegraphic communications, and gave expression to the opinion that 'they should be considered as a whole, in order that the needs of every part of the Empire may, as far as practicable, be provided for, and that suggestions may be obtained from all quarters as to the best means of establishing 'a complete system of communication without that increased 'expenditure which necessarily results from isolated action.'

"The joint deliberation of Delegates from all parts of Her Majesty's Empire, and the formal submission of their deliberate opinion under the circumstances of their appointment, and in view of the objects for which they were called together, should carry with it due weight.

"The reduction of telegraph charges is most important, but there are other momentous considerations, and while it has been indisputably shown that the new line will be able to do its work at far lower rates than is possible by the old line, most important advantages of another kind can justly be claimed for it. It will secure to the mother country a second and more direct means of reaching Australia, incidentally affording the much-needed connection with Fiji and other outlying dependencies. It will indirectly give a new means of communica-



tion with India, should the lines through Europe and the Red Sea become through war or other causes unusable. The new line will create common interests between Australians and Canadians; it will bring closer together the great outlying divisions of the Empire; it will play an important part in fostering British commerce and upholding the British flag on the Pacific. I humbly think that the £54,000 per annum, or whatever sum may be required to carry out the proposal now before the Government, would more advantageously be expended on the establishment of a new cable across the Pacific from Canada to Australia. Canada has always been prepared to contribute her full proportion of expenditure on works of an Imperial character. If she has expended fifty millions of pounds sterling in building a great national highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, who can doubt that she will be ready to do her share in establishing a new telegraph from her western coast to Australia. Is the opinion of the Colonial Conference, unanimously expressed, to be unheeded? Is it expedient that Canada and the Canadian route should be wholly ignored? Is it desirable that any course should be followed which will debar the Canadian Dominion from co-operating with her sister Colonies and with the Mother Country in a matter in which they each have a common interest? I venture to think that aid in the way proposed to the existing companies would be fatal to any Pacific telegraph; it would essentially be a step backwards, and could lead to no permanent good, while the same outlay expended in another direction would result in incalculable advantages. I speak advisedly, and with a thorough knowledge of what I speak, when I say that the sum of £54,000 per annum from the Australian and Imperial Governments, added to the assistance which may reasonably be expected from Canada and from other sources, would insure the completion of telegraphic communication between Great Britain and Australia by the Canadian route, and would realize the fulfilment of a national idea pregnant with lasting advantages to the great and growing communities under the one flag on the three continents. It would secure the completion of an alternative line of communication—British throughout—to multiply and strengthen the ties which bind the Empire together.

"I trust I may be pardoned for presenting the subject as it strikes a Canadian. However ungracious the task, I am impelled by a sense of duty to seek the earliest opportunity earnestly to point out that in my humble judgment it would be an error of grave magnitude, equally in the interests of the Mother Country, Australia, and Canada, to give effect to the proposal now under the consideration of the Government.

"I have the honour to be,

"My Lord,

"Your obedient servant,

"SANDFORD FLEMING."

Letter from Colonial Office to Mr. Sandford Fleming, C.M.G.

"DOWNING STREET, 7th July, 1890.

"SIR,—I am directed by Lord Knutsford to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ultimo, in which you draw attention to the evils which you consider would accrue if Her Majesty's Government should entertain the proposal to join the Australian Colonies in sharing the payment of the present cable subsidy, and in a guarantee to the Eastern and Eastern



Extension Telegraph Companies, in consideration of the reduction in the telegraph rates.

"In thanking you for your observations, which have been laid before the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, I am desired to refer you to the answer given by Mr. Jackson to Sir G. Baden-Powell in the House of Commons on the 12th ultimo, in connection with this proposal.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN BRAMSTON."

NOTE.

On June 12th, in the House of Commons, Mr. Jackson, in reply to Sir G. Baden-Powell, intimated that Her Majesty's Government had not been able to accede to the proposal to join the Australian Government in the proposed guarantee to the existing Telegraph Company. On the 17th, Mr. Goschen further discussed the question with the Agents-General, and promised that the matter would be fully reconsidered, and a definitive reply given. The above letter of July 7th, from the Colonial Office, goes to show that Her Majesty's Government remains in the position indicated by Mr. Jackson on June 12th.

These letters were printed and forwarded to many leading Australians and New Zealanders, along with the following:—

"To Australians and New Zealanders.

"CANADIAN OFFICES, 17, VICTORIA STREET,

"LONDON, S.W., July 18, 1890.

"FELLOW COLONISTS,

"I beg leave to address you on a subject of more than ordinary importance at the present moment, when your Colonies are completely cut off telegraphically from the rest of the world.

"The accompanying correspondence with Lord Knutsford refers to the traffic-revenue guarantee, proposed to be given to the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies. I have the best authority for stating that my letter of June 26th fairly expresses the Canadian view of the case.

"While the reply of the Secretary of State indicates that the Home Government declines to join in the guarantee, there is, as I am informed, some probability that the Australian Governments may, under force of circumstances, accept the terms offered by the existing Telegraph Companies. I venture therefore as a fellow colonist to point out that by co-operating with Canada a much more advantageous arrangement can be effected.

"The proposed guarantee to the Eastern and Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies, it is estimated by the representatives of these companies, would add to the liabilities of the Australasian Colonies, £54,000 more or less per annum.

"The length of cable to reach across the Pacific from Canada to New Zealand and Australia, allowing 20 per cent for slack, is estimated by competent authorities at 8,900 miles.



A cable of the very best type can be laid over this distance for less than £1,750,000; it is perfectly safe therefore to take the outside cost in round figures at £1,800,000.

"I have elsewhere given good reasons why this cable should be a public undertaking, owned by the Governments, worked and managed under a Government Superintendent.

"If so established, the whole capital, under a joint Government guarantee, could be raised at about 3 per cent, and would involve an annual charge of £54,000.

"I have elsewhere given indisputable evidence that telegraph messages may be sent between England and Australasia by the Canadian route at less than one-quarter the present rates.

"I need scarcely ask which course should be followed. The question is, should a monopoly of telegraph business be built up in the hands of the existing Companies, or is it in the public interest to establish an independent line, owned by the public, and under Government control? The one course would reduce the cost of telegraph messages to one-half the present rates, and add a liability to the Australian Colonies estimated at £54,000 per annum. The second course would reduce the cost of messages to one-quarter the present rates, and involve no heavier annual charges, while the £54,000 guarantee would be shared by Canada, and, I trust I may add, by the Mother Country. Moreover, the cable would be owned by the contributing Governments, and the profits would accrue to reduce, perhaps eventually extinguish, the interest charges. This is merely the financial view of the question; its momentous political aspect is dealt with in my letter to Lord Knutsford (appended), and in other documents submitted to Her Majesty's Government.

"The Admiralty has had in hand the work of sounding the new route since the beginning of 1888, so that there can be nothing to prevent the survey being completed during the manufacture of the cable, and the whole laid within two years.

"At this moment, when the existing cables are broken down in three places, I feel it a public duty to submit the case as it now stands for your earnest consideration. I humbly think I have shown how you may speedily and on easy terms obtain cheap telegraphy and the incalculable advantages of an alternative line by the Canadian route.

"I have the honour to be,

"Your obedient servant,

"SANDFORD FLEMING."

This correspondence is incomplete without the following letter from Sir John Pender and Mr. Fleming's reply thereto.

Letter from Sir John Pender to Mr. Sandford Fleming.

"THE EASTERN EXTENSION AUSTRALASIA AND CHINA

"TELEGRAPH COMPANY, LIMITED.

"WINCHESTER HOUSE, 50, OLD BROAD STREET,

"LONDON, E.C., 22nd July, 1890.

"DEAR MR. SANDFORD FLEMING,—I have read your circular letter of the 18th instant, together with the annexed correspondence with the Colonial Office on the subject of the recent unfortunate interruption of telegraphic communication with the Australian Colonies, and the establishment of an alternate



route *via* the Pacific, and if the various Governments interested are determined to have a line across the Pacific, and are prepared to incur the requisite expenditure for the purpose, I am quite ready as I have always told you, to co-operate in carrying out the work on fair and reasonable terms, and in this way the object might be attained more easily and economically than if third parties were employed. But if it should be decided to establish a Pacific communication as a separate and distinct undertaking, from the existing lines, it must not be forgotten that two cables across the Pacific will be required, which, according to your own figures would cost £3,600,000, or £108,000 per annum, as one line could no more be relied upon in the Pacific than in the Java seas, where all our three cables between Java and Australia were suddenly and simultaneously interrupted by earthquake a few days ago.

"Fortunately, however, this is a very rare occurrence, only one previous interruption of the kind having occurred on our system during a period of over 20 years. Moreover, the Java seas are mostly shallow, so that repairs can be easily and promptly made, as in the present instance, while the Pacific Ocean is not only subject, perhaps in a greater degree than the Java waters, to volcanic disturbances, but the depths are so great that repairs would be most difficult and costly when an interruption occurred.

"The cost of maintaining the present system amounts to over £100,000 per annum.

"I am looking forward, if spared, to visiting Hong Kong next year, travelling through Canada by the Canadian Pacific line, when I hope to inspect that wonderful undertaking in which you have played such a prominent part, and at the same time discuss with you the best means of establishing closer telegraphic communication between Canada and the Australasian Colonies when the time is ripe for carrying out the work.

"Faithfully yours,

"JOHN PENDER."

"P.S.—Your letter to Lord Knutsford ignores the fact that there is at present an alternative line to India *via* the West and East Coasts of Africa quite independent of the Red Sea route."

Letter from Mr. Sandford Fleming to Sir John Pender.

"17, VICTORIA ST., LONDON, S.W.,

"July 24th, 1890.

"SIR JOHN PENDER,

"50, Old Broad St., London.

"DEAR SIR JOHN,—I received late last evening your favour of the 22nd, and desire to thank you for it. I am very glad to find you are coming to realize that it is absolutely necessary to have an alternative cable to Australia by way of Canada and the Pacific. I have always held and I now hold that the means taken to establish the new telegraph connection is entirely secondary provided that the new line be secured. Its establishment by whatever means is the primary consideration, and it is for the Governments concerned to decide how it is to be done. In my humble judgment if they consult economy and desire to secure cheap telegraphy, they will act wisely in making the work a public undertaking and in retaining it in their own hands under an efficient management.



"I notice what you say about having two cables across the Pacific on account of possible interruptions, but it seems to me this conclusion on your part is scarcely logical, if as you say interruptions are so exceedingly rare. A breakdown once in twenty years would not of itself justify the laying of a second cable at an additional cost of £1,800,000.

"Are you, however, quite accurate? Is it the case that interruptions on your cable are so infrequent? I have a list before me by which it would appear that the Eastern Extension cables between India and Australia have broken down thirty-six times within the last eighteen years and of these, fourteen breaks were between Port Darwin and Banjoewangie, the nearest section to Australia. I notice also that one of the fourteen break-downs referred to caused an interruption of four months and another of three months and a half. The other interruptions were generally for much shorter periods. It is quite true that you now have more than one cable on that section, but I do not see that duplicating, even triplicating the cables on the same route is an absolute security from interruptions as shown by the simultaneous breaking down of all three cables for a period of ten days during the present month.

"Be all that as it may, my contention is simply that a line from Australia to England by way of Canada would be a great advantage all round. That to Australia and New Zealand, it would be better than relying wholly on the one existing route. To these colonies it would give two strings to their bow, and that is commonly held to be an advantage. You say that under certain circumstances two cables across the Pacific will be required. In this I am not disposed to disagree with you, as I believe more than two will eventually be required, but let us have one at a time, and the sooner we get that one the better. In after years other cables can be laid as they are required to meet the demands of a wonderful development of commerce which I am satisfied will come in the not distant future.

"You suggest that repairs in the deep water of the Pacific would be most difficult and costly. Let me remind you of the fact established by experience on the line between Lisbon and Pernambuco passing through waters about the same depth as the Pacific that no repairs of any consequence have been found necessary in the deep water section of that line, since it was laid some thirteen years ago.

"Referring to the postscript of your letter, there is indeed a cable laid round the west and east coasts of Africa connecting England with Aden in that way, but that line of cables passes through no less than ten foreign ports, beginning with Lisbon and ending with Mozambique. You are aware too the existence of that line did not obviate the necessity so recently as the month of May last of sending Australian messages through Russia, Siberia, China and French Cochin-China, when two of your cables east of Aden broke down. I still think I was strictly correct in the statement to Lord Knutsford respecting the proposed Pacific cable: 'It will indirectly give a new means of communication with India should the lines through Europe and the Red Sea become through war or other cause unusable.'

"Receive my thanks for your friendly letter and for the evidence it conveys to my mind that you are prepared to accept the conviction that Canada and Australia must be connected telegraphically. In this you merely evince your usual wise discernment, and few men have it in their power in a larger degree than you to hasten the advancement of a public undertaking fraught with so many advantages to the Colonies and the Empire.

"Yours faithfully,
"SANDFORD FLEMING."



The breaking down of the cables of the Eastern Extension Company and the complete telegraphic isolation of the whole of the Australasian Colonies was an emergency which, while it lasted, opened the eyes of all thinking men at home and abroad to the value of the proposed Pacific cable, and more especially to its vital importance to Australia and to Great Britain. The correspondence brought the question of an alternative route between England and Australia to the attention of men in official circles, and it could scarcely fail to have had some effect in showing them that in the common interests of the Colonies and the Empire it was daily becoming more and more expedient to push forward the nautical survey undertaken by the Admiralty so as to hasten the period when a cable would be established across the Pacific.

The facts set forth in these letters had, however, no effect in accelerating the work. Judging from results they seem to have had the opposite effect, for according to information recently obtained, it appears that the "Egeria" was immediately withdrawn from her work in the Pacific, that surveying operations were stopped, and moreover, that they have never since been resumed.

Canada and the Australian Colonies were deeply interested in the work so suddenly brought to an unlooked-for end, they believed this work to be in complete accord with Imperial policy, and for this and other reasons alluded to in the first part of this statement, they specially desired that it should be undertaken by the British Admiralty. They repeatedly represented that it should be prosecuted with vigour, and they asked to be allowed to share in the cost. All efforts, however, failed to have the survey accelerated, yet there was reason to suppose that under the orders issued to the "Egeria," if progress would not be rapid it would at least be continuous. There was no reason to think that the work would be discontinued in its incomplete state, and it is to be regretted that when discontinued no information of the fact was conveyed to the Colonial Governments. Only quite recently has it been learned that surveying operations had been suspended, and after repeated inquiries for particulars an answer has now come from the Admiralty dated the 30th of last month, conveying the unwelcome intelligence that the "Egeria" had been removed in September, 1890. Thus for some unexplained reason the survey had been brought to an end three and a half years ago.

OTTAWA, 20th February, 1894.